

# Legislation enacted to reduce jury costs



**A NEW BILL to reduce jury costs was signed recently by Gov. Jennifer Granholm (seated). Taking part in the bill signing ceremony were (left to right) Deputy Macomb County Clerk Todd Schmitz, Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh, Rep. Steve Bieda and**

**Bieda's niece, Ciara Lynch, who was visiting for "Take your Child to Work day."**

*Photo courtesy of Rep. Steve Bieda*

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm recently signed a bill that ends the practice of sending juror questionnaires to convicted felons who are ineligible to serve on juries.

The bill was sponsored by State Rep. Steve Bieda (D-Warren), who said he acted upon suggestions from Macomb County Clerk/Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh.

"It just makes common sense not to spend taxpayers' money trying to qualify a felon for jury duty when we already know felons are not allowed to serve on jury duty," said Bieda.

In addition to saving taxpayer money, Sabaugh said the bill makes the jury selection process more efficient.

Michigan law states felons cannot serve on a jury.

To select jurors, the Secretary of State provides a list of potential jurors to the county clerk every year from the drivers' license and Michigan identification card computer database. The clerk then sends questionnaires to a random sample from that list. Based on answers to the questionnaires, people qualified for jury duty may then be

randomly summoned for actual jury service.

The Department of State Police keeps a database of felons.

Last spring, Sabaugh worked with the state police on a pilot program to test the process of cross-checking the Secretary of State's database with the state police database to exclude known felons from the jury pool.

Sabaugh said she determined that at least 15,000 Macomb County names would have been removed from the county's list of more than 600,000 names her office received last spring

from the Secretary of State.

Removing the names of people the state already knows cannot serve on jury duty will result in reduced printing costs, processing costs and mailing costs for counties across the state, said Bieda.

"When you consider that this procedure could be duplicated in every county in Michigan, it could add up to big savings statewide," said Bieda.

The law does not impose a mandate on counties, but rather allows each county chief judge to decide whether to change their juror process.